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ABSTRACT

Although incivility and conflict have long plagued community colleges and other educational institutions, recent budget declines have made this situation more critical. In the past, those who disagreed could be bought off and organizations tended to hire layers of people to perform tasks that one person with a personal computer can perform today. For leaders of educational institutions, therefore, it is important that the institutions be transformed and that civility, caring, and respect be infused into the organization. Specifically, traditional singular leadership should be replaced by collective leadership, with traditional middle managers being replaced by management teams, and efforts should be made to include the voices of women, minorities, and other traditionally silenced groups into the organizational dialogue. While deep structural transformation takes time, the following nine, non-linear stages of the transformation process have been identified: (1) understanding the organizational structure; (2) articulating the institution's vision; (3) creating an environment of trust; (4) easing the threat of change; (5) using information to transform institutions; (6) moving away from hierarchical models of management; (7) providing opportunities for faculty and staff development; (8) creating an inclusive environment; and (9) evaluating managers' personal values. (HAA)

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INSTITUTIONAL TRANSFORMATION

Keynote speech by Zelema M. Harris
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INTRODUCTION

Good morning. I'm pleased to be here to discuss a topic that has been significant to me in my role as a leader. My presentation this morning is designed to:

1. Develop a framework for the process of institutional transformation (sort of bend your mind).

2. Present the process for bringing about desirable institutional change.

3. Motivate you to leave here today with one idea that will improve your institution.

First, I would like to establish some degree of credibility since there is such a diverse group of educators in the audience this morning. I have taught at both the high school, and university level, and worked as an administrator at both the university and community college level.

As I reflect on my life in education as a student, teacher, researcher, writer, and as a community college president for the past 16 years, I'm not very proud of the fact that little has changed in how we treat each other, our students, and our constituents. Nor am I proud of how many of us who have been placed in leadership positions have led.

A FRAMEWORK FOR CHANGE

I read a recent article in the Chronicle of Higher Education entitled "Whatever Happened to Civility?" (March 8, 1996). The article examines whether incivility is a new phenomenon in academe -- a sign of the times, or whether personal attacks and raucous debate are as old as our institutions.

Incivility, indifference, and fear have plagued and are continuing to plague our institutions. Today, however, our organizations cannot survive if we continue to harbor these vestiges of an era long past.

There is a saying in academic circles that anyone can manage when there is enough money. In the past, we bought off or fired those who disagreed. We hired layers of people to perform tasks that one talented person with a personal computer can perform today. Actually, we needed layers of people to communicate organizational rules and policies.

Today, workers can pull up the rules and policies on the computer screen, and they can access other information which previously had been "off limits" to anyone who wasn't at the top levels of the hierarchy.

We are beginning, by necessity, to allow workers to utilize

all of their skills. We simply do not have enough money to hire people to fill each box on the organizational chart. We are beginning to stretch our vision of what our roles are as leaders.

Some of us are now being criticized as being soft and too personal, and for including those who in the past have been marginalized. Ironically, though, some of our institutions are working because we have infused humaness, civility, caring, and respect into our organizations.

Fortunately, I have worked for and been mentored by some very talented and caring people who reinforced my belief that bosses don't have to boss, bosses can be kind and supportive, and still expect high performance from workers.

Perhaps we really don't need bosses. Now that's a real paradigm shift. In Charles C. Manz and Henry P. Sims, Jr.'s book, Business without Bosses, they present case studies of highly effective companies that utilize self-managing teams to manage their organizations. In this type of management structure, it is the middle manager who is most threatened by change.

One of the chapters in Business Without Bosses discusses, "Overcoming the middle management brick wall" as the biggest challenge to the successful implementation of teams.

Robert Theobald, an economist who is best known for his book, The Rapids of Change, defines a middle manager as a person who takes information up and down the organization, distorting it along the way, to maintain control and power.

We must begin to restructure new organizational roles for many of our workers. Whether we accept Robert Theobald's definition of a middle manager or not, we all must recognize how difficult it is for us to share power with others, especially those who are not near the apex of our organizations.

Educators have a passion for hanging on to the old even when it no longer makes sense. Many of our faculty persist in teaching a curriculum that excludes women and persons of color in a lecture format -- neither of which is appropriate for the learning styles and the life experiences of our diverse students.

Peter Drucker, the well-known management expert, has attacked our seeming inability to change fast enough when he wrote, "It is the motto of U.S. universities that when a subject becomes totally obsolete, then a required course is built around it." (Managing for the Future: The 1990s and beyond, 1992, p. 339)

While the world has changed around us, our organizations are not responding fast enough. Margaret Wheatley explains this so well in her 1992 book, Leadership and the New Science. She states:

In the Newtonian image of the universe, everything goes like clockwork. Life is predictable. Everything can be managed if you separate it into neat little parts.

Our organizations have all been influenced by Newtonian principles. But the machine world of Isaac Newton is simply not the world we see around us.

We live in a quantum world which, according to physicist Fritjof Capra, turns conventional thinking upside down. As Capra explained in his book, The Turning Point, "Whereas in classic mechanics the property and behavior of the parts determine those of the whole, the situation is reversed in quantum mechanics; It is the whole that determines the behavior of the parts." (quoted in Liberation Management, Peters, p.372)

As educators, we must consider what this new way of looking at the world means for our institutions.

As I speak to groups around the country, I find a common theme in the questions posed mostly by women and people of color, questions like ...

- "How can I get my supervisor to listen, to pay attention to what I have to say?"
- "How can I bring about change that is desperately needed in my

organization?"

- " How can I get my President to recognize that change is needed?"
- "How can my work, my contributions to the institution be understood, recognized, and valued?"

These questions come from voices that have been silenced, voices that plead for respect, voices that want to make significant contributions to our organizations, and voices, while different from traditional voices of power, want desperately to be included.

How do you create an institutional environment where creativity, productivity, innovation, and self-fulfillment can flourish? During the next few minutes, I will present a process that will create such an institutional environment. In other words, how do we transform our institutions?

I use the term transformation because it connotes a deep structural change - not a tinkering with existing structures. It means that we must examine all of our administrative and academic processes and stop doing things that make no sense. As our college is incorporating quality principles, one of the questions we continually ask is, "what is the dumbest thing you do every day?"

In Stephen Covey's popular book, The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People, the second of the seven habits listed is "Begin

with the end in mind." Covey asks you to imagine yourself at your own funeral. The program at your funeral lists four speakers. The first speaker is from your family, the second is one of your friends, the third is from your work or profession, and the fourth is from your church or some community organization.

Covey asks you to "think deeply (and ask yourself), what would you want each speaker to say about you and your life?" Covey continues "the most fundamental application of this habit is to begin today with the image, picture, or paradigm of the end of your life as your frame of reference or the criterion by which everything else is examined."

We can do a lot with "Begin with the End in Mind" because it's all about vision. I believe all of us are visionaries, but we haven't carried our vision to the end that Covey suggests, which is death. And we won't do that this morning. Today we're going to take an intermediary step.

I'd like for each of you to think about your own institutions as I briefly discuss the process of change. What do you want your institution to look like, what is your vision of the institutional climate for students, faculty, and staff? What is your vision for how people are treated? What about women and persons of color? What about those who are considered difficult and disgruntled?

How would it feel to walk into your office each day eager to undertake the tasks at hand? Warren Bennis, in his book, Why Leaders Can't Lead, states, "there is an unconscious conspiracy in contemporary society...that prevents leaders -- no matter what their original vision -- from taking charge and making changes."

Bennis discusses how easy it is to become embroiled in the minutia, rather than doing what you were hired to do. He writes, "The president should be a conceptualist. That's something more than being just an 'idea man.' It means being a leader with entrepreneurial vision and the time to spend thinking about the forces that will affect the destiny of the institution."

The process of change I will present hopefully will allow you to do exactly what Bennis encourages us to do, that is, "to provide leadership with entrepreneurial vision."

I'm going to touch on the whole notion of collective leadership that is inclusive -- leadership is not singular. However, collective leadership must be developed.

Not long ago I made a presentation to a group of community college staff, and I plunged right into the process of change. After finishing my presentation, one young woman came up to me and said, "I really liked your presentation, but why do you think we need to change?"

I don't want to take that chance today. So, if my introductory comments didn't give you some clue as to why change is needed, I'll touch upon four generally-accepted issues with which everyone of us in education is faced:

- You already know that budgets are tight and more of the burden is being placed on students and taxpayers.

- You already know that the United States is undergoing a profound demographic shift and that by the middle of the next century only about half of the population will be non-Hispanic whites, down from 74 percent today.

- You already know that the makeup of faculty at many of our institutions does not reflect the makeup of our students. Our institutions are experiencing large increases in the number of students of color. But how many of our institutions are making a serious commitment to increasing the number of faculty and administrators of color?

- And you are well aware that we're in the middle of the "accountability era." Taxpayers and politicians want to know what kinds of results they're getting from their investment in our institutions. Not only are we being held more accountable, we have

a whole new world of competitors who are ready and willing to serve our constituents if we aren't up to the job.

Peter Drucker wrote in 1990, "Schools will change more in the next 30 years than they have since the invention of the printed book." (Managing for the Future: The 1990s and Beyond, Drucker, p.335).

If Drucker is right, then the time is perfect for institutional transformation. While there are many factors of change over which we have little, if any control, I believe we can determine how our institutions are transformed.

In their book, Shared Vision: Transformational Leadership in American Community Colleges, John Rouche, George Baker and Robert Rose defined transformational leadership in this way: They call it the ability of the institution's CEO to "influence the values, attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors of others by working with ... them to accomplish the college's mission and purposes." (p. 11)

Transformation does not occur overnight. It is a process that demands your attention, your nurturing, and your passion. I have identified 9 stages in the transformational process. These stages are not linear. An institution may be in several stages at the same time.

The first stage I would like to discuss is Understanding the

Organizational Culture.

I believe the organizational culture must be understood before significant change can occur. When I arrived at Parkland about six years ago, I didn't have a model plan to impose. I came to serve. I needed to understand Parkland College. So I asked questions such as, "What are the desires of faculty and staff?" "How does the college treat its students?" "What is the college's history in responding to the community?" "What has the history been in hiring practices?"

I also asked, "Do the faculty have a collegial relationship with the administration, or has the relationship been historically adversarial?" "How does the community view the college?" "What is the college's climate, especially as viewed by women and people of color?"

Perhaps the most significant question I asked was this one: "What was the vision of the founding fathers?" I actually brought back several of Parkland's founders into the institution and discussed their vision for the college.

I took my time learning the institution while being pursued by faculty leaders who kept asking me, "When are you going to tell us your vision, where you want to take the college?" In other words, they said, people want to know what you want them to do.

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It took me six months to put it together, and in January, 1991, I presented to the college wide faculty and staff the challenges and opportunities facing Parkland, and painted a picture for our future. It was well-received and incorporated into our planning process. This process continues with a Futures Conference taking place every two years.

Another stage in the process of transformation is Articulating the Vision. I believe that vision is not singular, but collective. I like how Hickman and Silva described vision as "...that mental journey from the known to the unknown, creating the future from the montage of current facts, hopes, dreams, risks, and opportunities." (from Shared Vision: Transformational Leadership in American Community Colleges, Roueche, J.E., Baker, G.A., and R. Rose, 1989, p. 107). Our most significant role as leaders is to communicate constancy of purpose. While our mission responds to the question, "Who are we?" our vision responds to the question, "What do we want to become?"

A third stage is Creating an environment of trust. Transformation occurs in an environment of trust. Trust is essential for growth. A healthy climate must be created as we transform our institutions.

One of the most important ways to generate trust is for

administration to be open and honest and to provide moral leadership. People want to know where you stand on issues. They may not always agree with you, but at least they can trust that you are "all of a piece," as one writer put it.

Another stage in transformation is Easing the Threat of Change. Tom Peters, in his book Liberation Management, says, "If you don't feel crazy, you're not in touch with the times." (p. 18) Many people feel threatened by change, however, resistance to change is natural and necessary. We find ourselves balancing between change and stability, order and chaos.

The good news, according to Robert Theobald, is that more people than you might think are ready for change. When our systems break down and our old ways of doing things keep us from getting things done, people quite naturally become angry and frustrated. What we need to do is channel their feelings into a positive re-direction and give people the opportunity to re-build our institutions.

At Parkland, we bring people together across institutional boundaries to address a variety of institutional challenges. We engage in collective leadership, providing opportunities for others to lead.

A good example of this is our College Planning Committee, made

up of people from all areas of the college to help chart the strategic direction of the institution and decide funding priorities. As we in higher education all know, funding requests generally exceed the actual dollars available. When everything is important, how do you decide which requests are approved and which are not? And, who decides? At Parkland, faculty, staff, and department chairs "make their case" for funding to their colleagues on the Planning Committee. Each presentation must clearly show how the request supports Parkland's strategic goals. I feel this process has been one of the most invigorating experiences of my years in higher education.

Another stage in the transformation process is Using information to transform institutions. Margaret Wheatley's book, Leadership and the New Science, made me aware of how important information is in transforming institutions. We need information that "disturbs the peace, imbuing everything it touches with new life."

Wheatley asserts that we need to develop new approaches for how we use information. We should use it "not for management, but for encouragement; not for control, but for genesis."

Wheatley feels that our job as leaders is to push people to the edge. Order will result if we put the information out there.

Another stage in the process is Moving Away from Hierarchical Models of Management. These models simply do not work anymore. They limit the organization's collective intelligence by placing people in little boxes. These outdated models were created during the industrial era and they were designed, mainly, for control purposes.

Today, as we live and work in the age of information, we have knowledge workers. As described by Peter Drucker, knowledge workers often know more about their jobs than their bosses. Therefore, they should be managed differently . I treat employees as though they are volunteers. Volunteers don't have to be there.

Yet another stage is Developing faculty and staff. In order for our organization to continue growing, we must provide opportunities for people to grow as leaders. One of the ways we do this at Parkland is our annual Leadership Development Seminar. Based on a leadership model developed by Dr. Jeff Hockaday, the former Chancellor of Pima Community College District, Parkland's seminar gives participants the opportunity to learn about all aspects of Parkland and see how the college fits into state, national, and even global pictures.

We can only accept twenty participants each year and we always have more than twice that number of people apply for the Leadership Development Seminar. We'll keep offering the seminar until

everyone who wants to attend has the opportunity.

What we are doing is building a community of leaders that makes our institution stronger.

Another significant way we develop faculty is through our Center for Excellence in Teaching and Learning. Faculty-driven, the Center was created to facilitate and to enhance quality teaching and student achievement throughout our institution. Because of this focus on teaching and learning excellence, more faculty are assuming leadership roles within their classrooms. More faculty are publishing and presenting at regional and national conferences. Others are sharing their innovative teaching methods with Parkland colleagues via Center-sponsored workshops.

The next stage is essential to the process of transformation: Creating an inclusive environment. Although this may have been touched upon earlier in my presentation, I believe it is important to discuss separately. I established a Committee on Access, Equity, and Cultural Diversity at Parkland and this committee has helped in our efforts to make the college more inclusive.

Parkland is a state leader in diversity education. Many of our faculty and staff voluntarily sign up for this course. In fact, I'm a recent alumnus.

Recently, we received a statewide grant to conduct diversity education for faculty and staff at the University of Illinois, Eastern Illinois University, and several Illinois community colleges.

The Committee on Access, Equity, and Cultural Diversity also hosted the first statewide conference on multicultural education, which attracted more than 500 K through 12 and post-secondary educators, as well as such renowned speakers as Professor James Banks, and the late Dr. Myra Sadker and her husband, Dr. David Sadker, whose studies on gender bias are considered classics in the field.

The bottom line is that all individuals within the organization must feel they are respected, they must be treated with dignity, and they must feel they truly contribute to the institutional goals.

The last stage I would like to address is Understanding your personal values. Management consultant and author Ken Blanchard coined the phrase, "managing by values." Managing by values is about identifying gaps between what you say you believe and how you actually perform. The most important thing in life, and in your organization, is to decide what's most important.

In a 1996 publication by the Drucker Foundation, titled The

Leader of the Future, Stephen Covey states "the leader of the future ... will be one who creates a value system centered upon principles ... principles such as empowerment, trust, and trustworthiness ultimately control the effective results we seek."

Covey continues, "Correct principles are like compasses: they are always pointing the way. They don't change or shift, and if we know how to read them, we won't get lost, confused, or fooled by conflicting voices and values." (p. 151).

The issues we face in education call for a new kind of leadership and a new organizational structure. Our longing for the past will not help us to move toward the future.

We must rethink our old assumptions about control, order, obedience, and loyalty. We must begin to recognize that educational institutions are communities of individuals who want to contribute, to be respected, and to be encouraged. We need to stop behaving as though organizational boxes and reporting lines are real. Actually, we really need to stop drawing them.

We need to think of networks, and teams being formed to address specific issues -- moving outside of prescibed boundaries. We need to commit to the professional development of our staff. And, we need to provide support for those who are most threatened by change. Leaders of the past were builders -- they built

physical structures. Today, leaders must build from within.

Let's go back to Covey and our vision for our institutions. Let's begin with the end in mind. If we are clear on what our institutions can become, the process of transformation will be a journey worth taking.

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